

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15201

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TAGS: PDIP, VT
SUBJ: CONCLAVE 1978: ELECTION OF A NEW POPE

SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES INFORMATION REGARDING THE
CONCLAVE FOR THE ELECTION OF A NEW POPE AND "GUESSTIMATES"
REGARDING THE POSSIBLE DATES FOR HIS CORONATION AND THE SIZE
OF FOREIGN SPECIAL DELEGATIONS TO THE CORONATION CEREMONIES.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE CONCLAVE. THE CONCLAVE TO ELECT A NEW POPE WILL
BEGIN ON AUGUST 25. TAKING PART WILL BE 111 OF THE 114 ELIGIBLE
CARDINAL ELECTORS. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE 129 CARDINALS IN
THW SACRED COLLEGE OF CARDINALS, 15 OF THEM ARE OVER 80 YEARS OLD
AND THEREFORE INELEGIBLE TO VOTE UNDER THE PRESENT RULES FOR
THE ELECTION OF A NEW POPE. THREE OTHERS, WRIGHT (U.S.),
FILIPIAK (POLAND), AND GRACIAS (INDIA) ARE ILL AND WILL NOT
ATTEND. A POSSIBLE FOURTH, THE CARDINAL OF HANOI, MIGHT NOT BE
ABLE TO TRAVEL TO ROME BUT THE ISSUE IS STILL PENDING
AND THE CATICAN IS HOPEFUL THAT HE WILL BE ALLOWED TO COME.

2. LEADING CANDIDATES. ALTHOUGH OTHER STRONG CANDIDATES MAY
EMERGE BY AUGUST 25, ECCLESIASTICAL CIRCLES BELIEVE THAT
THE LEADING PAPABILI (CANDIDATES) AT THIS POINT ARE CARDINALS
SERGIO PIGNEDOLI (ITALIAN), SEBASTIANO BADDIO (ITALIAN), AND
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EDUARDO PIRONIO (ARGENTINE). PIGNEDOLI IS WIDELY KNOWN BOTH
IN THE CATHOLIC AND NON-CATHOLIC WORLD, HAS HAD PASTORAL,
DIPLOMATIC AND CURIAL EXPERIENCE, IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE THIRD
WORLD, AND IS CONSIDERED ABLE TO PROVIDE AN OPEN PAPACY --
OPEN TO DIALOGUE WITH OTHER RELIGIONS, PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS
AND DIVERSE CULTURES. HE HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED AS THE
CANDIDATE OF THE "LIBERAL" CARDINALS. BAGGIO IS WELL KNOWN

TO ALL THE CARDINAL ELECTORS AS THE POWERFUL AND INFLUENTIAL HEAD OF THE CONGREGATION OF BISHOPS WITH WHOM BISHOPS AND ARCHBISHOPS (INCLUDING CARDINAL ARCHBISHOPS) HAVE HAD ONGOING IMPORTANT ECCLESIASTICAL RELATIONSHIPS SINCE 1973. HE ALSO HAS HAD SUBSTANTIAL PASTORAL, DIPLOMATIC AND CURIAL EXPERIENCE. IN ADDITION TO HAVING SUPPORT AMONG THE ITALIAN CARDINALS, HE IS ALSO EXPECTED TO OBTAIN SUPPORT FROM AMONG LATIN AMERICAN CARDINALS, PROVIDING HIM WITH A SUBSTANTIAL BLOC OF VOTES. HE IS WIDELY BELIEVED TO BE THE CANDIDATE OF "CONSERVATIVE" CARDINALS. PIRONIO IS TALKED ABOUT AS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY IN THE EVENT THERE IS A STAND-OFF BETWEEN PIGNEDOLI AND BAGGIO. PIRONIO IS CONSIDERED PAPABILE BECAUSE HE IS OF ITALIAN DESCENT AND THEREFORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE ITALIAN CARDINALS AS THE FIRST MODERN NON-ITALIAN POPE, HAS HAD EXPERIENCE IN THE VATICAN BUREAUCRACY AS HEAD OF THE CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS ORDERS, AND IS ACCEPTABLE TO THIRD WORLD CARDINALS. HIS RELATIVE YOUTHFUL AGE OF 58 AND HIS EARLIER ASSOCIATION WITH "LIBERATION THEOLOGY" ARE HIS PRINCIPAL HANDICAPS AMONG CONSERVATIVE CARDINAL ELECTORS. TRADITIONALLY, CARDINAL ELECTORS, ESPECIALLY IN THE RECENT PAST, HAVE PREFERRED TO ELECT POPES FROM AMONG CARDINALS IN THEIR SIXTIES.

3. CONCLAVE RULES. A DETAILED RUNDOWN ON THE FORMAL RULES FOR THE ELECTION OF A NEW POPE WAS CONTINGENCY PAPER ON PAPAL SUCCESSION WHICH WAS SENT TO UER/WE ON MAY 22, 1978. SUFFICE IT TO POINT OUT HERE THAT THE 1975 CONSTITUTION FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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ELECTING A NEW POPE URGES THAT THE ELECTION SHOULD BE "RAPID AND UNANIMOUS" FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH; AND PROVIDES FOR THREE MEANS FOR THE ELECTION OF THE POPE --BY "ACCLAMATION", BY TWO-THIRDS PLUS ONE VOTE OF THE CARDINAL ELECTORS, OR BY DELEGATION TO A COMMITTEE OF CARDINALS THROUGH MAJORITY VOTE. MOST VATICAN OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE LONG INTERREGNUM BETWEEN THE STATE FUNERAL OF AUGUST 12 AND THE OPENING OF THE CONCLAVE, AUGUST 25 WAS PURPOSEFULLY DESIGNED TO 1) PROVIDE AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CARDINAL ELECTORS TO DEBATE THE FUTURE POLICIES OF THE CHURCH; AND 2) TO REACH A CONSENSUS ON A CANDIDATE PRIOR TO THE ACTUAL BALLOTING. THUS, IT SEEMS, AS INDICATED IN PARAGRAPH 2, THAT THE CANDIDACY LIST HAS ALREADY BEEN SHORTENED SOMEWHAT. THE PRESS LAST WEEK WAS SPECULATING ON THE CANDIDACY OF SOME 11 CARDINALS.

4. CORONATION DATE. OLD VATICAN HANDS ADVISE US THAT THE CORONATION DATE IS USUALLY SET ONE WEEK AFTER THE ELECTION OF THE NEW PONTIFF. (POPE PAUL SET HIS CORONATION FOR JUNE 30, 1963 OR 9 DAYS AFTER HIS ELECTION WHICH TOOK PLACE ON JUNE 21, 1963.) THE BEST ESTIMATE FOR A CORONATION DATE WHICH WE HAVE FROM VATICAN SOURCES IS SEPTEMBER 9 OR 10, 1978. HOWEVER, SOME AMBASSADORS ACCREDITED TO THE VATICAN ARE ADVISING

THEIR GOVERNMENTS THAT THE CORONATION COULD ALSO TAKE PLACE AS EARLY AS SEPTEMBER 2 OR 3. THEY BASE THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE CONCLAVE WILL ELECT A NEW POPE IN ABOUT THREE DAYS SINCE MOST POPES IN THE LAST CENTURY WERE INDEED ELECTED IN THREE OR FOUR DAYS.

5. SPECIAL DELEGATIONS. THE VATICAN SECRETARIAT OF STATE ADVISES US THAT A DECISION REGARDING THE SIZE OF SPECIAL DELEGATIONS IS STILL PENDING BUT THEY INDICATE THAT THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE STAFF OF THE SECRETARIAT OF STATE IS THAT THE NUMBER BE KEPT APPROXIMATELY THE SAME SIZE AS THE DELEGATIONS TO THE STATE FUNERAL FOR POPE PAUL VI.

6. COMMENT: WE REMAIN IN CONTINUING CONTACT WITH THE VATICAN
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SECRETARIAT OF STATE AND AS SOON AS WE HAVE OFFICIAL INFORMATION REGARDING DATES AND THE SIZE OF DELEGATIONS, WE WILL INFORM THE DEPARTMENT BY IMMEDIATE TELEGRAM.HOLMES

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